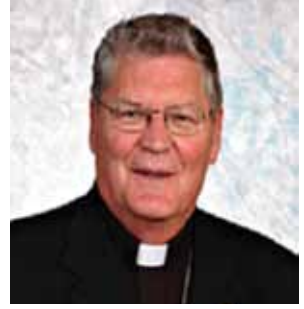


SPIRITUAL ADVISOR'S MESSAGE

Most Rev. Martin W. Currie

Archbishop of St. John's and Bishop of Grand Falls



Elijah was the greatest of the Old Testament prophets and so much so that it was thought that he would come back to usher in the Messianic era. Yet, we see him weak, exhausted and terror stricken. He is sick and tired of being God's prophet. He is on the run for his life. He wants to throw in the towel. He begins to doubt himself and is losing hope. He had fought idolatry; this brought him into conflict with Jezebel who wanted to kill him. He fled and lay down and prayed that God might take his life to end his troubles. Elijah had lost his spirit. He lost hope.

When we lose hope, we lose our greatest source of strength. Hope is what wings are to a bird or roots to a tree.

God sent an angel with food and drink, and Elijah was renewed and able to continue his journey. He knew that his strength didn't come from food alone but that God was with him.

Paul tells us in Ephesians, in what may have been his last letter, that there is one hope given to all of us. Elijah

and the prophets struggled with the difficulties of the society of their day, so how can we be so certain in the face of so much evidence to the contrary that God is still with us?

The United Nations sets goals and our government sets goals, but the rich get richer on the backs of the poor. Will justice ever come?

It's hard to remember a time when there were not wars raging in parts of the world and people dying from violence in our cities. Will there ever be peace?

If suffering is unstoppable such as AIDS, SARS and H1N1, where is the healing hand of God? If death conquers all, what is the point of hoping? Nietzsche said, "Hope is evil because it prolongs our torment". Was he correct?

Hope is the sister of faith and love. We find our way by faith as it tells us what to believe, and charity tells us how to love. But without hope, faith and charity do not have much meaning. Faith sees what is and charity loves what is, while hope sees what will be. Hope leads to the future, adventure and the promised land.

Long before we had faith in God, God believed in us. Even

before we loved God, God loved us.

Before we even thought about the possibility of hope, God hoped in us. God is like the prodigal father who hoped for his son to return. God is the hopeful shepherd who can't stand losing one of his sheep, or the housewife looking for lost coin.

Hope is the only thing that keeps darkness from being absolute. When logic fails, unpredictability reigns and the future seems threatened and bleak. Hope looks beyond satisfaction; it refuses to accept more of the same. Hope hangs on the end of a rope, on the edge of despair. Hope relies on God to achieve what faith believes and charity loves.

You can't prove the value of hope. It comes with no guarantee — it's not backed by money nor validated by signatures. Hope tells us that the future need not be determined by the present, that what is possible is not deterred by the facts.

Hope is the personal promise of God that whatever evil has us by the throat will be forced to give up its grip. And since the ultimate good of every

creature is God, all will finally be well.

When? Today, tomorrow, the next day or the last day. Our task is to keep hope alive for as long as it lasts. †



ST. PATRICK PARISH COUNCIL CAMPBELL RIVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Members of St. Patrick Parish Council meet monthly for a birthday luncheon. During their February gathering, they discussed the *CWL Day of Peace & Hope Activities Kit*. It was unanimously decided to consider the council's very active prayer shawl ministry as an activity for peace and hope.

Several members who have received prayer shawls testify to the warmth, consolation, healing, peace and hope that is received through a prayer shawl. Recipients grieving the loss of a loved one, or who may be lonely, ill, or suffering critical illness, all testify to the consolations found through the prayer shawl and the friendliness and communication that it provides.